



# NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL

## POLICY MANUAL

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS ACCEPTABLE USE

<b>Originated Date:</b>	Adopted on 2 May 2005 – Min. No: 118/05 (as Policy 43)
<b>Amended Date/s:</b>	Reviewed 12 December 2016 – Min. No. 362/16 Reviewed July 2019 Reviewed 20 January 2025 – Min. No. 25/0033
<b>Applicable Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
<b>Objective</b>	To ensure that electronic communications are properly used and are protected from a variety of threats, such as inappropriate use, fraud, copyright violation and sabotage.
<b>Administration:</b>	Corporate Services
<b>Review Cycle/Date:</b>	Next review 2026.

#### POLICY STATEMENT

The Council may provide information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and services to Councillors and employees to assist them to perform their work. Generally this includes computing hardware, software, e-mail, the Internet and Council data and information – collectively ICT resources.

The use of these ICT resources must not jeopardise the resources themselves, the activities of others using these resources or the reputation and/or integrity of the Council.

All Councillors and staff must comply with this policy.

This policy provides specific instructions on the ways to use ICT resources and electronic communications (including email and internet) and the purpose is to ensure that electronic communications are properly used and are protected from a variety of threats such as error, fraud, copyright violation and sabotage.

#### GOALS

The goals of this policy are:

- Councillors and Staff effectively use ICT resources in the course of their work;
- Councillors and Staff are provided with adequate professional development and support to effectively utilise ICT resources;
- Councillors and Staff use of ICT resources complies with legal and ethical standards and standards of interpersonal interaction;
- Personal use of Council ICT resources is incidental and does not cause harm;
- Councillors and Staff support the security of Council ICT resources;
- Copyright and intellectual property is respected; and
- Councillors and Staff understand their responsibilities in relation to the Council's ICT resources.

#### COUNCIL PROPERTY

As productivity enhancement tools Northern Midlands Council encourages the use of electronic communications. These systems allow you to communicate easily and efficiently on business matters with clients, customers, ratepayers, other agencies and co-workers and colleagues. Electronic communication systems, and all messages, data, information and graphics generated on or handled by them, including backup copies, are considered the exclusive property of council.



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The content and usage of electronic communications may be monitored at council's discretion to support, among others, operational, maintenance, auditing, security and investigative activities. For example, council may from time to time be called upon to turn over electronic communications to a third party (e.g. police, a private individual) in the course of litigation. Email may also be monitored if council has reason to believe that a Councillor or officer is using email in violation of this policy.

Users should structure their electronic communications in recognition of the fact that council and third parties may from time to time have the need to examine the content of electronic communications.

### **BRING YOUR OWN DEVICE / IoT DEVICES**

The usage of non-council owned (BYOD) electronic devices such as mobile phones and computers on the Northern Midlands Council network, and the purchase and usage of devices such as smart appliances on the Northern Midlands Council network, will be approved on a case by case basis by the IT Systems Officer and/or Corporate Services Manager after consultation with either the IT Officer or an external IT specialist.

In determining whether to approve a request for BYOD/IoT devices, consideration will be made as to:

- The business requirement for the device.
- The impact on the NMC network in terms of bandwidth, security and ongoing maintenance requirements.
- Other considerations such as may be required under NMC's BYOD/IoT policy.

On granting approval for the BYOD/IoT device, staff may be required to sign an acceptance to comply with NMC's BYOD/IoT device policy. A copy of this policy document may be requested from the IT Systems Officer.

### **APPROPRIATE USAGE**

Electronic communications have been provided to facilitate Council related communications with clients, suppliers, ratepayers, other agencies, co-workers and colleagues and should never create either the appearance or the reality of inappropriate use. As electronic communications can be copied, forwarded, saved and intercepted and archived, your selection of words and attachments should be chosen carefully.

When using e-mails remember you are sending/receiving information on behalf of the Council. The Council's electronic communication system must not be used in a manner that could adversely impact on the reputation of Council.

The following Notice and Disclaimer will be attached to all outgoing e-mails:

***Northern Midlands Council Confidentiality Notice and Disclaimer***

*The information in this transmission, including attachments, may be confidential (and/or protected by legal professional privilege), and is intended only for the person or persons to whom it is addressed. If you are not such a person, you are warned that any disclosure, copying or dissemination of the information is unauthorised. If you have received the transmission in error, please advise this office by return email and delete all copies of the transmission, and any attachments, from your records. No liability is accepted for unauthorised use of the information contained in this transmission. Any content of this message and its attachments that does not relate to the official business of the Northern Midlands Council must be taken not to have been sent or endorsed by it or its officers unless expressly stated to the contrary. No warranty is made that the email or attachment(s) are free from computer viruses or other defects.*

Council's electronic communications system generally must be used only for business activity. Occasional or incidental personal use is permissible so long as, in the Council's estimation:

- It does not consume more than a trivial amount of resources;
- It does not result in disruption to any systems;
- It does not harm the Council's reputation;
- It does not represent personal opinions as those of the Council;
- It does not interfere with employee productivity; and
- It does not pre-empt, interfere or conflict with any business activity.



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However, 'personal messages' will be treated no differently than other messages, and may be accessed or reviewed by council as described above.

Users are forbidden from using council's electronic communications systems for soliciting, for charitable endeavours (excepting if authorised by Management), for private business activities or personal financial gain, gaining unauthorised access to a computer system, or other non-council activities. Council also prohibits the unauthorised distribution of copyrighted information through electronic communication. In addition, electronic communications may not be used for knowingly transmitting, retrieving or storage of any communications of a discriminatory, harassing or defamatory nature, which are derogatory to any individual or group, which are obscene or threatening, for chain letters, or any other purpose which is illegal or against council policy or contrary to council's interest.

Our ratepayers, customers and suppliers have the right to communicate with the Council without being exposed to words or images which may be considered confronting or offensive.

When composing electronic communications, choose your words carefully. Do not engage in inappropriate exchanges. Keep in mind that, unlike telephone or face-to-face conversations, participants cannot rely on tone of voice, gesture or verbal feedback to clarify meaning. Unless cautiously composed, messages can be interpreted as rude or offensive.

Any employee found to be abusing the privilege of council facilitated access to electronic communications will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal for major abuse, or having the access privilege removed for minor abuse.

Councillors found to be abusing the privilege of council facilitated access to electronic communications may have the access privilege removed.

### **USER ACCOUNTABILITY**

Many of the threats to information security occur due to ordinary lapses of security in the workplace rather than planned attacks on the Council. Common events are: the loss of work that has not been backed up or stored correctly on the Council's electronic document management system, ECM; leaving a logged in computer unattended; sharing passwords; and the introduction of viruses via e-mail and USB drives.

Where USB drives/external hard drives are required to perform business functions, these must be supplied or approved by the IT Officer before use. Under no circumstances should users bring in hard drives or USB drives from external sources and connect them to council devices without prior approval from the IT Officer.

Regardless of the circumstances, individual passwords must never be shared or revealed to anyone outside of council. To do so exposes the authorised user to responsibility for actions the other party takes with the password.

If users need to share information, they should utilise authorised information sharing mechanisms. To prevent unauthorised parties from obtaining access to electronic communications, users must choose passwords that are difficult to guess.

All employees shall ensure that all correspondence (including e-mail and attachments) and any other data, graphics and other council related documents or information is properly entered and recorded into Council's electronic document management system, ECM.

### **INFORMATION SENSITIVITY**

Users are reminded that most electronic communication systems are not encrypted by default. If sensitive information must be sent by electronic communication systems, encryption or similar technologies to protect the data must be employed. Unless you are using a data encryption technique or are specifically authorised to do so, at no time should you use electronic communications to forward confidential Council, financial or employee information.



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The Council's electronic communication system must not be used for the provision of personal, sensitive or confidential information to unauthorised persons.

Please refer to the Information Technology Officer for further information in regards to encryption.

When communicating using electronic communications, identify yourself clearly. This is critical especially when emailing to people outside council through the Internet. For example, where necessary, clarify for recipients that you represent only yourself, not council opinion. The Council's Confidentiality Notice and Disclaimer should be attached to all outgoing e-mails.

### **MESSAGE PRIVACY**

Except as otherwise specifically or expressly authorised by council, users may not intercept or disclose, or assist in intercepting or disclosing, electronic communications. However, because Council is responsible for servicing and protecting its electronic communications networks and maintaining this policy, it is occasionally necessary for Council's information technology personnel to intercept or disclose, or assist in intercepting or disclosing electronic communications.

Respect the privacy wishes of others. Messages should not be forwarded or copied for general distribution without the permission of the author/sender. Editing or doctoring messages or the author/sender's name without the author/sender's permission is also prohibited. Furthermore, electronic communications can be accessed by council in accordance with this policy.

### **MESSAGE FORWARDING AND MASS MAILINGS**

#### *External message forwarding:*

recognising that some information is intended for specific individuals and may not be appropriate for general distribution, electronic communications users should exercise caution when forwarding messages. Council information must not be forwarded to any party outside council without the prior approval of the Business Unit Manager. Blanket forwarding of messages to parties outside council is prohibited unless the prior permission of the appropriate manager has been obtained.

#### *Internal mass mailings:*

such messages may be sent on a council wide basis for council business purposes only. Personal messages, advertisements or solicitations are in violation of this policy. Please contact your Business Unit Manager if you require further information or clarification of an issue in relation to this policy.

### **COPYRIGHT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

Councillors and staff must recognise intellectual property and copyright is an important issue in the digital environment. While it is very easy to copy software, information or graphics electronically, it is against the law unless permission has been granted, and exposes the Council to legal liability risks.